

How many persons were there in Uncle Sam's big family on June 17? If this noble American sire is not quite like the fabled dame of Mother Goose, who had "so many children she didn't know what to do," he has so many that he isn't sure but once in ten years what the total number of his offspring is, says the New York Herald.

Measured by the per cent. of gain between the censuses of 1880 and 1890, which was 24.6, the population of the United States to be disclosed by the national roll call, just completed, should reach a total of 77,500,000. As a matter of fact, it does not seem likely that the total will exceed 75,000,000, and probably will not reach that figure.

Several noteworthy factors have been at work to effect this, to many, surprising result. Immigration has fallen off to a remarkable degree. In the ten years ending June 30, 1890, 4,849,000 persons entered this country from foreign lands. In the decade closing with June 30 of this year almost a million less will have sought an asylum on America's shores. These figures omit the immigrants from Canada and Mexico.

The reason for this marked decrease in immigration lies very plainly in the hard times period of 1893-94. A small flood of 623,034 persons entered the United States in the fiscal year of 1892. Two years later the total was barely half as great, and so far spread was the news of our business and financial distress that in 1898 the immigrants were only 229,299, the smallest number since 1879. An increased total last year has been followed by a greater one this year, so that the coming decade will probably see a return to the huge immigration figures of the early 80s.

Coincident with the decline in immigration, due to the business crisis, must be reckoned a decline in the natural growth in population. Adverse financial conditions operate not only to increase the death rate, but also to decrease the birth rate. Aside from this it is a notable fact that the per cent. of natural growth of population has been constantly and rapidly decreasing in this country for a whole century. If we correct the admitted errors in the census tables of 1870, it will be found that the ratio of increase of population by natural growth in each decade has steadily dropped from 35.6 in the 1801-10 period, to 14.1 in the 1881-90 period. In other words, there was born to the average community of 1,000 inhabitants between 1801 and 1810 356 children, while to a similar community between 1881 and 1890 there were born only 141 children.

To give a keen point to this plain truth that the nation is slowing up, so to speak, in its natural growth, the interesting state censuses of 1895 are of decided value. Nine states counted heads in that year. Two in New England, Massachusetts and Rhode Island; one middle state, New Jersey; one southern state, Florida; four middle western states, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota and South Dakota, and one far western state, Utah. Of this typical group, representing all sections of the country, only one showed an increase in per cent. of population equal to the to be expected half of the increase of the previous decade.

The sole exception was New Jersey, which grew 27.7 per cent. between 1880 and 1890, and 15.7 per cent. between 1890 and 1895. Two causes may explain this increased ratio of growth—proximity to New York city, which, with its ever gathering density of population, forces more and more families to fly to the less crowded and less expensive suburbs, and proximity to the main port of entry of immigrants, who would naturally, in hard times, be loath to spend their savings in taking a long trip into the west.

How much influence this latter consideration had is potentially illustrated by the figures of some of the western states' censuses. Thus, Minnesota, which grew more than 66 per cent. between 1880 and 1890, gained but 21 per cent. in the five years following. Kansas, which added 43.2 per cent. to her population between 1880 and 1890, actually lost 6.4 per cent. between 1890 and 1895. In both these cases probably the lack of new settlers from foreign lands was not more marked than the slackening of immigration from other states.

Now some one will ask in view of the sharp decrease in immigration and the probable decrease in natural growth. What is the population of the United States to-day? With all due deference given to the many points involved, it may be fairly estimated that there are between 75,000,000 and 77,000,000 inhabitants in this country. The exact number is nearer the smaller than the larger figure.

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